

Sermon preached at the Profession of the Monastic Vow by the Brother Scott Wesley Borden, December 19, 2003

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Scott, this is your last chance. We don't have to do this. And don't worry about filling up the time. By my count there are 14 more hymns by Charles Wesley and one by John in the hymnbook that did not make it into this service. If I stop preaching now, we might just be able to sing them all in the next hour! We'll have a good ol' hymn sing.

I jest but I wanted to call attention to how indebted our worship is to the brothers John and Charles Wesley. Their hymnody and preaching deeply enriched Anglican piety and praying and believing. Hymns perhaps more than any other medium inform our belief. The words sink deep into you, into the quiet place of the heart, even when you don't think you are paying attention...somewhat like the psalms we sing.

It is these two Anglican presbyters whom you honor today as you take their name as part of your name in religion, Scott Wesley. Their witness was to the living Christ in midst and to the power of his love. Through our worship we know and respond to this reality. For them the method of praying the daily office of the Book of Common Prayer and the regular reception of the Holy Communion were deeply formative. (They must be impressed by your commitment to the four-fold daily office-in their day it was but twice a day!)

Their presence in our midst in North America and England enlivened the Church to its call to proclaim the good news-except that the stodgy old Church of England couldn't find a way to be expansive enough and so to this day the Anglican Churches remain separated from their Methodist sisters and brothers. Would that all division cease!

We celebrate them this morning, for they represent the tradition in which you were raised-the tradition in which you came to know the living Christ and his love. They are your tradition, a part of what has been passed on to you and through you to make you who you are. It is part of what you bring to this community as you come to make your vow.

I am very conscious right now of tradition. It has come to signify a body of knowledge-"the tradition". We hear a lot about it these days. But actually, the tradition is only what we hand on from one to another, from the Latin traditio, literally "the delivery from one hand to another." We are given the good news. We hold it, we take it in, it remakes us, and we then pass it on to another and another. It is the handing on that makes it tradition, the handing on from one hand to another...a long line of people holding hands back to the beginning...that's the tradition...people in touch with each other.

I am conscious of tradition because you have chosen the most senior monk and the most junior monk (monk-in-training, actually) to take roles today's liturgy: Anthony Gerald as the president of the eucharistic assembly and me as preacher. We represent the handing on from one to another, from generation to generation, in this community.

It is a tradition that you have been standing in and being formed by for 2 ½ years and the tradition of Holy Cross joins all the other tradition in which you stand. What is to be your role among us as you stretch forth you hand in that great chain of connectedness?

Be one who dares to show forth the living Christ in our midst. In the words of John Wesley "trust in Christ, Christ alone." Let "Christ whose glory fills the skies,... fill [you] with radiancy divine". Let your obedience and stability lead you into conversion daily into the image of the Holy One whom we

worship and adore.

What will it look like to have the living Christ at work in you? It will be "a flame of sacred love upon the altar of [your] heart". If you are the image of the Holy One, you will be filled with the love of Jesus-for Jesus and of Jesus.

And that love is active. Benedict in the rule says that through humble service to others we grow in the love of Jesus (cap. 35). The rule of the Founder is more explicit: "love must act as light must shine and fire must burn." That is more than a motto for sweatshirts and tote bags. It is a challenge. The "love of Jesus down in the heart" is no love unless it acts through the hands and feet and mind and speech in order to make a difference in a world where love is absent and mute. To love with the love of Christ means to touch others with his hands of comfort and healing and to weep with them his tears of sorrow and compassion. It also means loving the world enough to use the power of Jesus who cleansed the temple and climbed up upon the cross to defeat sin and death, using that same power to name and to change the structures of injustice and poverty, the structures of violence and war, the powers and principalities of this age.

Scott Wesley, hold out for nothing less than to be converted into the shining light and cleansing fire of Jesus' gentle and powerful love acting in this community and in this world.

And for the rest of us. Scott Wesley's monastic vow is the means by which he is called to live out his covenant of baptism in which he was united with Christ forever and reborn as his true image. We all share that baptismal covenant and what I pray for Scott Wesley today, I pray for us all-that we may be converted more and more into the image of the risen Jesus and be his love at work in this world, that in us and through us, Christ will "finish then [his] new creation" and we all be "changed from glory into glory".

Amen. Come Lord Jesus.